



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS TO PERFORM AT VA CONCERT

Kentucky Headhunters, an American country rock band, will perform at the Valentines for Veterans concert Saturday, February 4, 2017. The concert takes place at 3:00 PM at the Washington Pavilion at 301 S. Main Avenue in Sioux Falls.

It is the fifth annual concert the Sioux Falls VA has hosted to honor veterans during National Salute to Veterans Month. Thanks to donated funding, the VA is able to provide area veterans up to two complimentary concert tickets with reserved seating, while they last. All veterans are encouraged to call 605-333-6806 or 333-6851 to request the free tickets.

Blue Star families will receive special recognition during the concert.

VA staff will also be available during a Veterans Benefits Fair from 1:00-3:00 PM to visit with individual veterans regarding health care and benefits.



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114TH FIGHTER WING GETS NEW COMMAND CHIEF

The South Dakota Air National Guard's Chief Master Sgt. Michael J. Clauson assumed his new position as the 114th Fighter Wing's new command chief master sergeant during an assumption ceremony at Joe Foss Field, Jan. 7.

Clauson was selected by Col. Nathan Alholinna, 114th FW commander, to replace Chief Master Sgt. Dean Hillberg, who held the position as the highest enlisted member of the organization for the past three years and retired at the end of 2016.

As the command chief for the 114th FW, Clauson is tasked with advising his superiors on quality-of-life issues and matters relating to the enlisted airmen of the unit, among other duties.

Clauson entered the Air National Guard in July 1996 and began serving as a firefighter. After serving 14 years as a firefighter, he was selected as the 114th Civil Engineer Squadron first sergeant. He served as first sergeant for three years where he enhanced his institutional competencies and military doctrine.

"I embraced the first sergeant motto of 'my job is people, everyone is my business,' this reinforced my ability to serve my airmen," said Clauson.

Clauson's most recent position before selection as the new wing command chief was as the 114th FW human resource advisor.

"I am prepared to serve as our next command chief and I believe I have been preparing for this for the past 20 years," said Clauson. "I am excited to serve in this capacity and truly look forward to all the great things our airmen will do."



U.S. Air Force Col. Nathan Alholinna, 114th Fighter Wing commander, South Dakota Air National Guard, passes the unit colors to Chief Master Sgt. Michael J. Clauson,.

SCHMITZ ASSUMES SENIOR NCO DUTIES FOR 152ND CSSB

Command Sgt. Maj. Chadwick Schmitz, of Pierre, assumed responsibility of the senior noncommissioned officer position in the South Dakota Army National Guard's 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion during a ceremony at the Pierre National Guard armory, Jan. 8.

Schmitz assumed duties from Command Sgt. Maj. Samuel Harkin, of Brandon, who served in the position since 2012.

"I feel like I'm home again," said Schmitz. "I came to the 152nd as the headquarters readiness NCO in 2007 and helped build the unit from roughly five people to what it is now. This is an awesome unit, I'm very glad and proud to be here."

"Command Sgt. Maj. Harkin has left some very big shoes for me to fill," continued Schmitz. "This unit has been successful at everything it has ever done, and I know it will continue to be successful."

"The one thing I want you to remember is the 152nd is one of the best, if not the best, CSSBs in the United States," Harkin said, while addressing the 152nd Soldiers. "Those of you who were in Afghanistan know we set standards that the Army can't even beat. The 152nd has been successful because of the things that all of you do. You are what makes the South Dakota National Guard the entity that it is."



As the unit's senior NCO, Schmitz is responsible for advising the unit commander on all aspects of the battalion's enlisted soldiers, providing guidance and mentorship to those soldiers and assisting in ensuring the battalion is prepared to handle all assigned missions.

The 152nd CSSB provides command and control and supervision for four units with more than 500 soldiers in six communities throughout South Dakota and can deploy worldwide to provide multifunctional combat support and combat service support to forces throughout an area of operations in a combat theater.

Schmitz began his military career in 1995 as an airborne cannon fire direction specialist in U.S. Army. After serving on active duty for four years, he enlisted in the South Dakota Army National Guard as a member of Bravo Battery, 2-147th Field Artillery Battalion. He entered the Active Guard Reserve program in 2001 as the readiness/training NCO for Charlie Battery, 2/147th FA and continued to serve in a readiness capacity for Alpha Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion and the Headquarters Company, 152nd CSSB.

Schmitz completed two tours of duty during his career - the first in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and the second in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2013. In 2015, he became the operations sergeant major for the 109th Regional Support Group, where he served until now.

VETERANS ARTWORK SOUGHT FOR CREATIVE ARTS COMPETITION

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System is seeking area veterans who want to share their creativity to enter visual art, including woodworking, painting, leatherwork, needlework, paper crafts, sculpture and more for the local Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Veterans who receive care from the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center or one of its five outpatient clinics are eligible to participate and may enter up to two pieces. The pieces must have been created within the last year and be submitted no later than March 1, 2017.

Entries will be available for the public's viewing March 9, 2017 from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM in the new Primary Care addition of the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center. Judges from the local community will name winners, and a reception and awards ceremony will take place at 2:00 PM. Veteran artists will have the opportunity to enter the National Veterans Creative Arts competition, which will take place in Buffalo, NY in October 2017.

Employees will also display their arts and crafts during the show but will not compete with veterans.

For more information about submitting artwork, contact Shirley Redmond at 605-333-6889 or Diane Larsen at 605-336-3230, Ext. 9-6418.



VETERANS TOWN HALL IN SIOUX FALLS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Dakotas Regional Office and Sioux Falls Health Care System will host a town hall for veterans, family members, Veterans Service Organization representatives, and the public to provide feedback and recommendations about VA health care and benefits.

The Town Hall will be held on Wednesday, February 1, 2017, at 5:00 p.m. at DAV Chapter I (1519 W. 51st Street) in Sioux Falls.

The Town Hall affords VA leadership to hear feedback, thoughts, and concerns and to answer questions about VA benefits and VA health care. A benefits clinic will also take place from 4:00-5:00 PM. VA representatives will be available to receive veterans' claims for compensation benefits and answer questions about compensation benefits and eligibility.



Upcoming Events

2017

Jan. 30—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Fort Pierre

Feb. 1—Veterans Town Hall—DAV Chapter 1 (1519 W. 51st Street) - Sioux Falls 5:00 pm (CT)

Feb. 1—American Legion Legislative Reception—American Legion Post 8 Cabin—Pierre (520 S. Pierre Street) - 5:30 pm (CT)

Feb. 4—Valentines for Veterans Concert—Sioux Falls Washington Pavilion—3:00 pm (CT)

Feb 10-12—SD American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma

March 1—SFVAHCS Creative Arts Festival—Sioux Falls VA Medical Center 2:00 pm (CT)

April 19—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)

Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown

Aug. 14-17—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre—Ramkota

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